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Assistant in the Library, British Museum



A Paper read at a Monthly Meeting of the Library Association, May 11, 1891

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OF GOVERNMENT PUBLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION ARE RADICALLY CHANGED." (R. R.
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A PLEA FOR

Annual Lists of State-Papers and Annual Reviews of State-Papers, as being essential preliminaries to State-Paper Catalogues.

PREFATORY NOTES. (i.) *As read, this paper originally included a general preface written with the view of emphasising the importance of making State-Papers more available for public use, and showing in a general manner that in no country had the treatment of State-Papers been anything but disappointing, if we compared the actual results with the standard of success which it is quite possible to attain to. I have decided, however, to omit this preface as being a branch of the subject which might more profitably form the subject matter of a separate paper.*

(ii.) *I find, after further experience and investigations, that the whole subject of State-Paper Lists, Reviews, and Catalogues is even more dependent for success on attention to prior steps of work than I had originally realised. For this reason, the matter cannot be comprehensively or satisfactorily dealt with, without first enunciating more fully than I have already done (in my previous paper) the Theories appertaining to those earlier stages, viz., the Theory of Compilation, and the Theory of Publication. It will be seen, therefore, that I have commenced the whole subject backwards, beginning with the last stage instead of with the first. I do not regret this, however, as I believe that the subject may perhaps be made more readily intelligible in this manner than by the alternative method. Having then already dealt with the final stage (A State-Paper Catalogue), I shall now try and show cause for my advocacy of Annual Lists and Annual Reviews of State-Papers.*

IN the summer of 1890, in a paper introductory to the Theory of a State-Paper Catalogue, I expressed my belief that in order to render the State-Papers of any nation properly accessible to the public there were two essential preliminaries :

(i.) An *Annual List of State-Papers*; (ii.) An *Annual Review* of the publications appearing in that List, and I inferred that both publications were necessary, even if a Catalogue of the State-Papers of the same country were contemplated or were already in existence; and I further implied that none of the three publications necessarily encroached on one another's province, but that the List was a necessary preliminary to the Review, and both List and Review necessary to the proper compilation, continuance, and full use of the Catalogue.

I start first with the assumption already greatly recognized in this country, that every man has a right to know of the existence of every single State-Paper published in the country of which he is a citizen, except there be some very special reason on grounds of political expediency for withholding that information. Furthermore, it will not be disputed that he has a right to know where any given State-Paper was published, by what Department or person, at what date, what it relates to, how it can be procured, and, in fact everything about it.

But how is he to secure this information? "By a List," is the answer. "And what kind of List?" "A full and comprehensive one," is the reply. "Exactly so! But where is the country where a List is published according to your definition?" And this is where the fault lies. There are many countries in which Lists of one sort and another are issued. But there is no country which publishes *one comprehensive* List which you could consult with the certainty of finding a notice of every *bona fide* State-Report for the year, together with the series of statements necessary to the proper description of such Reports.

In some countries, the purely *Departmental* Reports are jumbled up together with the purely *Parliamentary* Papers, under the head of "Sessional Papers." Being thus associated together with Parliamentary Papers for the use of Houses of Parliament they are printed, arranged, and bound on principles solely adapted to that purpose. Thus, instead of being arranged and bound up according to clearly defined natural subject-groups, with well-chosen titles for the important reports, the minor reports being collected together under general titles, they are entered in the Lists (if at all), and bound up, according to dates of printing or "Command." So long

as they have reference numbers and dates, it matters not that reports which are long and important should be placed on a level with those which are trifling in nature (such as short tabulated returns) because an Alphabetical Index repairs the evil! But even then an Alphabetical Index is only a partial remedy, if the Lists are compiled upon false principles, and it would not be required at all for a List of *Departmental* Reports, provided these reports were kept separate from the ordinary *Parliamentary* Papers, and thus allowed to be entered in a List according to their own special requirements.

In other countries the Sessional Lists and Indexes are so meagre as almost to be worthless, and (worst of all crimes) are almost invariably bound up with the huge Sessional volumes, so as never to be obtainable separate at any price.

In some instances the deficiency is supposed to be remedied by the existence of Departmental Lists. But the majority of men never hear or know of their existence, and even then they are often very difficult to be obtained. Furthermore, if they are fortunate enough to procure them they will probably find that they only contain a limited number of the reports of the Department which happen to be in print, or a selection of undated reports, the titles of which are clumsily abbreviated and which, for any evidence to the contrary, may be one or ten years old.

Departmental Lists have their appointed ends, and are indeed necessary to the compilation of the one National List I advocate, but they must not be allowed to supplant it.

On other occasions the publications of a department are noted in the pages of the ordinary annual report, but in such cases they would not readily be looked for and easily escape the eye.

In other instances, and in some countries, I fear these swell the majority, the publications of the National Departments are noted *nowhere* at all.

It will readily be imagined from the foregoing that it is no easy matter for our simple citizen to secure the information he wants. "Well, but your 'simple' citizen can go to the Library, where he will get what he asks for," is the retort, "and besides, what does he want with all this information? If he were a learned student in quest of deep knowledge by which to benefit his country there might be some reason for all this to-do." "Very well," we reply, "while we could easily quote numerous

instances where the simple citizen whom you disdain and whose claims you would ignore has become the expert and master-statesman, we will ignore his claims on this occasion, because it is just as easy to show that the experienced librarian and the learned student are each equally in need of this same information as the 'poor citizen.' And if it were not obvious we could show that the same difficulties which harass the librarian and the student trouble the civil servant also throughout his whole career."

A librarian who is cataloguing State Papers is bound to assure himself of numberless little and apparently insignificant points which to the ordinary eye might seem altogether trifling, but which, taken together, are in reality of the highest importance, and the elucidation of which is an absolute necessity if the librarian is to make a correct, explicit, consistent and useful catalogue.

For instance, in regard to reports which relate to such a country as India, it is an additional clue to the rank and merits of a report to know whether it was published on behalf of the Imperial "Government of India," or was the work of a Provincial Government. And, apart from differences of Imperialism and Provincialism, since Indian State Papers have been published by many different Governing Bodies, it is not possible to catalogue them with absolute correctness so as to be easily found, unless we know which of the said bodies published each individual report. The full importance of this point will be realised when we consider that reports relating to the administration of India may have been published by at least six different governing bodies, *i.e.* :

1. *By the E. I. Company's Servants in India.*
2. *By the E. I. Company's Court of Directors in London (and even perhaps by the Board of Control).*
3. *As E. I. Company's Reports published as Parliamentary Papers.*
4. *By the British Government's Servants in India (i. The Imperial Government. ii. The Local Government).*
5. *By the India Office in London.*
6. *As India Office Reports published as English Parliamentary Papers.*

Again ; it is necessary for the cataloguer to know by what Department a report was issued, and also the official title of the chief of the Department, for this also affects correct catalogu-

ing. And this knowledge is just as necessary to the student also, for a report is sometimes valuable or valueless, according as it is published by one Department or another. For, although written on the same subject and with similar title, it may be written from quite a different point of view, with quite a different object, and arranged on quite a different system.

Again; it is of no small value to know the name of the immediate compiler of a given report, since in many instances it makes all the difference, for the official and historian alike, to know that the opinions expressed in a certain report or series of reports were those of a man of eminence and reliability or the contrary, thus enabling them to trace back the reports of the one and avoid those of the other.

Furthermore, inasmuch as the names of Departments are often so general as to afford little or no help to the cataloguer, and since Departments are so liable to constant reorganisation with consequent changes in the reports, it is often necessary for the cataloguer to know the official description both of the officer who has compiled the report, as also of him to whom it is transmitted, as indicating what Branch of a Department it belongs to.

Next, since Departments and Subjects are not necessarily consistent or reciprocal, we wish to know something definite concerning the *matter* of the report. To what general subject does it relate? To what division of that subject? Next we shall wish to know to what territory the report relates—whether to a whole territory, or to certain parts of it, and if so, to which parts.

We shall then ask what period of *Time* the report covers. A year or a century?—and if it be an annual report, it is necessary to know whether it relates to a calendar, financial or agricultural year, and when those years begin and end, since the two latter ones are always liable to change. Want of attention to such points may easily affect the accuracy of statistics which are based upon periods of time. And if a report be *Biennial* or *Triennial*, this also should be clearly stated in order to save fruitless labour in searching for annual reports which do not exist.

Next—the *Edition* and *Date*. Does the report supersede all previous ones? Is it the first of a series of “Occasional” reports, on the first of a series of “Annual” reports; or, is it only an experimental report which happens to relate to a whole year, but will not be repeated again?

And then, of course, the number of pages, the place where published, the date of issue and price.

Finally (and it is here alone that the List and the Review meet in danger of trespassing on one another's grounds) it might be advisable to append to the List a column to include any "*Remarks*" calculated to supply useful information which could not very well be inserted in the existing columns.

Under "*Remarks*" it might often be stated with advantage what was the immediate object for which a report was compiled. This information is often necessary to the cataloguer before he can assign a report its proper place in a catalogue, while in showing the general lines of the report it would enable the student to judge at once whether he would find in it the information he desired.

Often we ask ourselves: Is this the only report on the subject, or is it published in conjunction with others? This question would be answered. At other times, we ask: Is the subject reported upon for the very first time, or, is it reported upon for the first time separately? If the latter, in what report was it originally included, and in what section of that report?

The "*Remarks*" column would also serve the purpose of drawing attention to neglect of necessary details of publication, thus enabling them to be rectified in the future (*e.g.*, "No title page." "Table of Contents wanted." "No Index," &c. &c. &c.).

The above is a general sketch of the many uses which an Annual List might serve, and the case is in no way overstated nor the value of such a list exaggerated. But the list refers mainly to the *exterior* of the reports. It remains now therefore to deal with their *interior* matter, and this brings me to my consideration of the second preliminary, an *Annual Review of State Papers*.

It is not necessary or indeed possible to sketch the shape of such an Annual Review in minute detail, inasmuch as this depends mainly upon the actual matter of the reports to hand. It is sufficient to state that it will draw attention to all that is most remarkable in the reports of the year, both as to matter included or omitted.

It has slowly dawned on mankind during the last ten years that men like to be informed *what* to read, and *where* to find it. At first this might appear to result from a spirit of indolence in an age in which men prefer to be done for rather than to do.

But second thoughts will convince us rather that the tendency is due to a genuine difficulty amounting to an impossibility for the generality of men to keep pace with the rush of life, and thus, in the matter of reading, to read what ought to be read. Consequently each year sees us more and more dependent on indexes and selected lists and other aids. As in the world of general literature, so in each particular section of it. And thus in the section of State-Papers. It becomes, therefore, more incumbent on us to do all that is possible to simplify research and to facilitate the final possession of knowledge. And in no section of literature is this simplification more needed than with State-Papers which so greatly affect the weal or woe of a country. And in no section is failure to do so to be more deplored, since in no other direction can such satisfactory results be obtained at so little cost of labour.

The need of a Review of State-Reports is thus primarily due to the enormous number of reports published in the course of each year in contrast with the small amount of time which can be bestowed upon them. But there is another cause which increases the necessity of such a remedy, viz., the impossibility of accurately gauging what we may term the *accidental* contents of the average report. Students of State-Papers will have found that in their researches they may wade through years of annual reports, and find mere ordinary routine news, when, just as they are about to give up in despair, they may suddenly stumble across a nugget of gold. And so great is this uncertainty concerning the insertion or omission of extra-ordinary information, that even those most experienced in the search for it can never be sure of knowing where and when to look. Moreover, as we have pointed out before, it is impossible for cataloguers or catalogues to supply all the information necessary. Hence the need of a Review which shall note the occurrence in the pages of the yearly reports of matter of special importance, which might otherwise be forgotten and lie concealed for ages.

The special information to which we allude as so irregular in its occurrence may be generally expected to appear under the following circumstances :

It may be entered in the first report issued by a department, or it may be given in any report which relates to a year in which any great change of departmental organisation (amalgamation, &c.) has taken place. Individual appointments in a depart-

ment may produce the same effect. The changing of supreme officers or the appointing of a new compiler of an annual report will often be an occasion for introducing a special chapter or appendix on the work and history of the department. And again, if a department be abolished, a history of its work would naturally appear in the last report. Special matter may be expected in a report relating to a year in which some *external* fact has vitally affected a department, either temporarily or permanently. (*e.g. In connection with the Famine (Cyclone), the report on ——— contains an able memorandum on the history of past scourges (Cyclone-Storms), with a code of regulations to assist in forestalling and counteracting the evil in the future.*)

Special attention would be drawn to the commencement of new investigations and reports of Governments on such subjects as Agriculture, Archæology, Natural Products, and Industries. Special publicity would also be given to systems of official publication. Thus it is not every one who knows that the Annual General Administration reports of the several provinces of India (as also the Moral and Material Progress reports), contain special reports every tenth year, when not only the events of the last decade are summarised but the whole past history of each subject is re-written up to date, so as to form a handy reference-volume for the next ten years.

Defects of compilation and publication (faulty titles, &c.), might also often be remedied in the proposed Review (*e.g. In the Report on the Revenue Administration of Bengal, the compiler practically narrates the history of the different Revenue systems throughout India. The work might, therefore, have well been entitled: "Review of the various Revenue systems throughout India, with special reference to the Province of Bengal."*)

And, finally, a great deal of general information could be given, which would be invaluable to the student. Thus, studying the history of any given subject, as for instance that of Education, we would naturally wish to know at what period did the subject of Education first occupy the attention of the Government of ——. What officials have played a prominent part in the advocacy of its progress? Were they all of the same school of thought? If not, what were their respective views, and where shall we find them contrasted? Where can we find an epitome of the progress of Education in ———, with an account of the causes of failure or success?

The above notes are but the barest hints as to the nature of the information which might be sought for, but I hope they are sufficient to show the form which the Review might take, and the uses which it might fulfil.

The writer has merely to add that the Annual List and Review must not be regarded as original suggestions on his part, inasmuch as the idea is already carried out by the Indian Government in reference to the publications of the *Public Press* throughout India. He merely seeks, in dealing with State-Papers, to apply those principles (with necessary modification or expansion) which have already been considered necessary and found successful in the case of the non-official works of a whole Empire. And here, in regard both to List and Review, the question may aptly be asked: Realising the existence of countless questions which are ever arising in connection with the State-Papers of the different Governments of the world, whose duty is it to answer them in order to save the waste of endless and often fruitless labour which must ensue, and in order to facilitate the proper cataloguing and use of the same? Is it the duty of the Government which issues those reports; which controls the compilation and publishing of them; which is on the spot, and which alone has the knowledge and power necessary to answer the questions satisfactorily? Or is it the duty of the struggling librarian, who has no necessary connection with the Government concerned, who is perhaps thousands of miles away, and who has neither the information, nor the power to obtain the information, which is so necessary to the interests of his work and his country?

There can surely be but *one* answer.

Draft Schedule of List.

[COUNTRY.]

Annual List of State Reports published during the Year
(The Reports are arranged under the several Departments by which they are issued.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Registered Number.	General Subject.	Special Branch of General Subject.	Title.	Author, Editor or Translator of Book or any parts of it.	Transmitted from :	Transmitted to :	Territory Report relates to	Period of Time Report Covers.	Pages.	Edition.	Number of Copies of Edition	Place of Printing	Place of Publication.	Date of Printing	Size.	Date of Registering.	Price.	Remarks.	Registered Number.
							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		

*Subsequent modification:
all sections X'd to be omitted as sections and included
in ~~the~~ the general title as part of that title.*